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Donohue, James J.
Milton Hannibal Smith, his
life and achievements

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SMITH, MILTON HANNIBAL

MILTON HANNIBAL SMITH

HIS LIFE and ACHIEVEMENTS

Address of James J. Donohue

Before

The Filson Club, Louisville, Ky., April 4, 1949

WHEN I was approached by Judge Hill about the engagement that is responsible for my presence here this evening, very sincerely I said to him that I did not rate a Filson Club invitation. Judge Hill, my partial friend since he came to Louisville from his Henry County home, replied he did not agree with me, and added that I could choose my own subject. That did it, and I am here, duly appreciative of the honor you have done me, grateful to Harry Hill and hopeful that I shall measure up to my opportunity. Despite my limitations, my topic being what it is, I should not fail, and if the size and calibre of my audience may be accepted as a true barometer, then in the selection of my subject I made no mistake.

I have long wanted to make a public acknowledgement of the debt of gratitude employes of the "Old Reliable" (it is as an employe that I am before you) owe Milton H. Smith, and to pay tribute to his genius as a railroad executive, as a courageous railroad builder and, above all else, as a very human individual with a heart of gold. You have given me that opportunity and I could not gratify my ambition under finer auspices. That it has come in the sunset of my career as a railroad man takes nothing from but rather adds to the satisfaction that is mine.

I am the only officer of our Company now in service who had the privilege of serving through thirty-five of the thirty-nine years of Mr. Smith's tenure as chief executive officer, and probably there is no other man now living who had that privilege. I worshiped my idol from afar and I would not have you believe that I at any time during the period sat close to the throne. I was in Mr. Smith's private office only twice and am sure that up to four years before his death he did not know me by name when we passed in the halls of our office building.

I am not going to tell you my age because, first, I want to leave something to your imagination, and second, there is in the audience a lady taking note of my every utterance who warned me, not that I should refrain from having my picture taken in a bathing suit, but that on this, my night of nights, I must not indulge my penchant for age-telling. But I will say this—accounting in part for my devotion—that for seventy-nine years, every dollar coming into the hands of my father and myself in the shape of salaries or wages, if you please, came from the treasury of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad. During a period of thirty years our service with the Louisville & Nashville was concurrent.

There have been hundreds of thousands of employes who, at one time or another, since 1866, the year Mr. Smith came to our Company, have depended on it for the livelihood of themselves and their loved ones. My father, an Irish immigrant, was brought to this land of opportunity at an early age. He became a railroad blacksmith, and a good one, but not once in my long period of service did a superior officer of mine inquire as

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to my antecedents or scratch my back to learn whether I was a Protestant or a Catholic. On the Louisville & Nashville there is no royal road to preferment. Unless you have gray matter in your head and loyalty in your heart, you get nowhere, no matter who your forbears may have been. This policy, inaugurated by Mr. Smith many years ago, was religiously adhered to by him, and since then by his successors in office. There have been only three—Wible L. Mapother, Whitefoord R. Cole and James B. Hill—and each has vied with the other in their love and devotion to their former chief.

On October 20, 1920, in anticipation of his death which occurred four months later, Mr. Smith had the secretary of the Company forward to the editors of Louisville papers a sketch he had prepared of the main events of his life, and truly it was just a sketch, containing, as it did, only about three hundred words. Accompanying it were his photograph and a copy of a telegram which had been sent to him on the occasion of his eightieth birthday by Mr. E. P. Ripley, at that time President of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company. After congratulating Mr. Smith on a long and well spent life, Mr. Ripley said: ". . . if I leave behind me as good a reputation as you will it will be the best legacy I can leave my children." Of all the messages of similar import received by him, Mr. Smith preserved Mr. Ripley's telegram for more than four years and arranged for its publication after his death. The very fact that he did shows he was not devoid of sentiment.

From the autobiographical sketch we learn that Mr. Smith was born in Greene County, New York, September 12, 1836, the son of Irulus and Almira (Blakeslee) Smith. (We have a record of Amos Smith, Milton H. Smith's grandfather, born also in Greene County, New York, on February 4, 1776, who married Amanda Johnson.) When two years of age Mr. Smith was taken by his parents to Chautauqua County, New York, and when fourteen years of age, the family with his grandparents, moved to Cook County, Illinois. He was twenty-two years of age when he took up his permanent residence in the south. He learned telegraphy in the office of a telegraph company at Oxford, Miss., and agency work in the employ of the Mississippi Central Railroad Company at Jackson, Tenn. In June 1861 he was transferred to Holly Springs, Miss., as telegraph operator and chief clerk to the Superintendent of the same line. In September 1863, when only twenty-seven years of age, he entered the service of the United States Military Railroads as Master of Transportation and had charge of military transportation at Stevenson, Ala., at Chattanooga, Tenn., during the Atlanta campaign, and afterwards at Huntsville, Ala., Knoxville, Tenn., and Atlanta, Ga. He came to Louisville in September, 1865, to enter the service of the Adams Express Company, and in August, 1866, he was employed by the Louisville & Nashville as local agent at Louisville.

Nothing is contained in the sketch about Mr. Smith's education. As a matter of fact, it was self-acquired. The son of a farmer in Cook County, Illinois in 1850 had about the same educational advantages as did Abraham Lincoln in Spencer County, Indiana when he was Mr. Smith's age. "Mr. Smith, where were you educated?" asked Judge Alex P. Humphrey when preparing to cross-examine Mr. Smith at a time when he appeared as a witness in the case of Western Union Telegraph Company v. Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company. "Wasn't educated," laconically re-

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plied Mr. Smith. That answer must have come as a revelation to Judge Humphrey, because at the very moment he had on the table before him numerous letters addressed by Mr. Smith to the President of the Telegraph Company beginning immediately after a letter from the Telegraph Company was received in the President's office in 1909 saying that the contract between the two companies, theretofore existing, would be abrogated, and indicating that should negotiations looking to the execution of a new contract fail, the Telegraph Company would proceed to condemn a right of way for its poles, wires and appurtenances on the railroad property devoted to the public good, under a statute slipped through our Legislature ten years before. These letters were couched in precise, incisive English, they manifested in every line a thorough knowledge by the writer of their subject matter, and the Telegraph Company was not left in doubt as to what it would be expected to pay for the use of our right of way. And Judge Humphrey knew, better than most, whose was the guiding hand directing every important step in the controversy, which lasted seventeen years. On that particular trial there was a verdict in favor of the Railroad Company for a sum ridiculously low, and when a judgment was entered on that verdict, the judgment was appealed to the United States Circuit Court of Appeals. While the case was pending in that court, Mr. Smith sent his representatives to Frankfort, and their efforts, supplemented by an intensive campaign of education back home, brought about the repeal of the 1898 statute. When the judgment was reversed by the court above, the Telegraph Company had no statute on which to rely and it was compelled to change front to its serious disadvantage. It is well to let bygones be bygones, but I think it not inappropriate to say that at the conclusion of the litigation the amount the Telegraph Company paid for the use of our right of way was much nearer the $100 per mile per year demanded by Mr. Smith than it was to the $3.50 per mile per year awarded by one of the juries. It was rumored around the office at the time that the amount received covered the cost of the badly needed extension to our office building. I would not know about that, but this I do know: as an added reward for legal services of a high order rendered over a long period of time, Mr. Jouett got for our office building one of the finest railroad libraries in the country.

With the hope that it will be found worthy of a place alongside the paper read before your organization twenty-nine years ago by Mr. Charles K. Needham on the life and achievements of Albert Fink, I shall leave with your Secretary a manuscript concerning the life and achievements of Milton H. Smith, with certain appendixes (copy of Mr. Smith's autobiographical sketch, copy of Mr. Ripley's telegram, clippings from the Courier-Journal of February 23, 1921, and copy of resolution adopted by the Board of Directors at its March, 1921, meeting) of which my address must necessarily contain only a condensation. It is appropriate that the record I have built up should be placed with the Needham paper concerning Mr. Fink. Albert Fink, a highly educated German immigrant who never lost his German accent, came to the Louisville & Nashville as a bridge engineer in 1858, at a time when the Company sorely needed the services of a bridge engineer, since the line to Nashville was not then open, the bridges over Green, Barren and Cumberland Rivers remaining uncompleted. It was Albert Fink who, because of his contacts with Mr. Smith during the Civil War, appointed him as local freight agent

at Louisville in August 1866, and then, in June 1869, took the unusual step of promoting a local freight agent to the position of general freight agent. At the time, Mr. Smith was but thirty-three years of age.

Technically, of course, Mr. Smith was Mr. Fink's subordinate, but actually, he was his collaborator. Both saw eye to eye with respect to the ultimate destiny of the Louisville & Nashville as a through line rather than as a local road, and as to the place our railroad must take in repairing the ravages of the Civil War and bringing prosperity to the Southland.

Mr. Smith and Mr. Fink worked together until October 1, 1875. On that date Mr. Fink, who, at the time, was Vice President and General Superintendent, resigned, and after that Mr. Smith carried the burden alone. I might say in passing that it was most unfortunate that Mr. Fink severed his connection with the Company in 1875. Had he been Vice President and General Superintendent in 1878 it is entirely safe to say the continuity of Mr. Smith's service would not have been broken in October of that year. This came about under rather dramatic circumstances. 1878 was the year of the yellow fever plague in the south, and when a southern city, in order to prevent the passage through its environs of refugee trains from New Orleans enroute to Nashville and Louisville, the only havens of refuge, established what was called a "shotgun" quarantine, Mr. Smith went personally to that city and made an appeal for the lifting of the quarantine on humanitarian grounds. When he found the common council of the city adamant, he served notice on that body then and there that so long as the quarantine was maintained, no trains from the north would be permitted to stop in that city. Greatly agitated, the common council sent to Louisville a committee of citizens to protest the order to the then President. The mission was successful, Mr. Smith was overruled, and thereupon he resigned. I very strongly suspect that the yellow fever episode was simply the straw that broke the camel's back. Mr. Smith's family lived in Louisville and when he resigned he had no job, but he was without a job not for long. He entered the service of the Baltimore & Ohio, at Baltimore, almost immediately and shortly afterward became its General Freight Agent. On October 1, 1881 he went to New York City as General Agent for the Pennsylvania, returning to Louisville as Vice President and Traffic Manager of the Louisville & Nashville on January 1, 1882. Six months later he was made chief executive officer of the Company, with title of Vice President, and the duties of that office he performed until his death, with titles of Vice President and President. He was elected President the last time on March 9, 1891.

As will the Louisville & Nashville next year, the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad Company this year is celebrating its centennial. It is a great railroad and has a great President, Mr. Ralph Budd, who has served it in that capacity for sixteen years. On February 12 there was a banquet in Mr. Budd's honor at Aurora, Illinois, the Burlington's starting point, and this banquet called forth a reference to Mr. Budd's career in The Railway Age, in which the writer quoted and applied to that career the familiar line of Ralph Waldo Emerson that an institution is but the lengthened shadow of a man. If the line was applicable to Mr. Budd, how much the more may it be applied, with propriety, to the lives and work of Albert Fink and Milton H. Smith, to whom was committed the future destiny of a railroad which, by their genius, was made into a great system. The Louisville & Nashville

is indeed the lengthened shadow of Albert Fink and Milton H. Smith, and of the former, Mr. Smith, in 1901, had this to say:

> It is with no little pride that I record here the fact that the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company gave to the railway world so eminent a man as Mr. Fink; for he did indeed finally become, as the Commissioner of the great Trunk Line Association, the practical dictator in the traffic matters of this country.

For a second time, dramatic circumstances brought about a change in Mr. Smith's career. A crisis in the Company's affairs was responsible for his elevation to the presidency. It had come to light that at the New York headquarters there had been practices that had brought the Company's financial structure into jeopardy. As a result, the then President resigned in May 1884. Mr. J. L. Rogers was then elected in his place, but conditions were such that he considered the task of saving the Company an insurmountable one, and resigned a month later. Thereupon, Mr. Smith was called to New York and was elected President on June 11, 1884. If ever the man was ruthless in his life, he was ruthless during this period in order to save his beloved railroad. Expenses were cut to the bone, an austerity program was inaugurated, and the practices referred to were eradicated. At the annual meeting of stockholders in October 1883, Messrs. Jay Gould, Russell Sage and Thomas Fortune Ryan had been elected to the Louisville & Nashville's directorate. At the annual meeting after Mr. Smith became President the gentlemen named were not reelected. From Mr. John J. Telford, for many years secretary of our Board of Trade, who at one time was Mr. Smith's secretary, and as such accompanying him to New York, I got this little human interest story. Mr. Smith, upon reaching the New York office, told Mr. Telford to send word to the Western Union Telegraph Company to remove two stock tickers from the office of the Board of Directors. The Telegraph Company was not prompt in responding to the request, whereupon Mr. Smith kicked the tickers out into the hall. Mr. Smith, incidentally, had very little use for the financial titans in New York. Years later, when they were using L. & N. stock as a football, he called John W. Gates, of "bet-a-million" fame, a bull in a china shop, and of the elder J. P. Morgan he said: ". . . Mr. Morgan's idiosyncrasy is the creation of enormous combinations. He is in the position of a strong man in the circus, on his back, feet up, keeping an enormous cask revolving in the air, which sooner or later must come down." At the time of this observation, J. P. Morgan & Company was in control of the L. & N., having, in 1902, bought controlling interest from the Gates-Hawley combination which had theretofore gone into the market and bought L. & N. stock to the extent of some three hundred thousand shares. Afterwards, that controlling interest was sold to the Atlantic Coast Line, but while Morgan & Company had it, the Louisville & Nashville was compelled to buy, along with the Southern Railway Company, stock in the Monon which Gates owned and wanted to get rid of. Mr. Smith was opposed to the purchase, and the purchase turned out exactly as he had predicted—a disastrous loss for both the Louisville & Nashville and the Southern Railway Company. Three of the Company's directors, one of them Mr. Smith, voted against buying into the Monon, and it is safe to say that Mr. Smith's "no" was a resounding one.

On October 6, 1886, the crisis having passed, Mr. Smith returned to Louisville as Vice President of the Company.

In our office we have a list of fifty-five railroads acquired, leased or constructed, forming the Louisville & Nashville system. Of these, only eight were acquired during the time, 1878-1882, when Mr. Smith was away from our property at Baltimore and New York. In that period the principal acquisition was the Louisville, Cincinnati and Lexington Railway, acquired in 1881. The line was not in good condition and the work of rehabilitation was Mr. Smith's problem, and it remained a problem for a good many years. The line did not own the bridge across the Ohio River at Newport, and Mr. Smith did not get around to buying it until in 1904, and then he bought what turned out to be a gold mine for the Company. It is not important to go into the subject of the primary purpose for making the purchase just at that time, but Mr. Smith probably realized that the investment would be a good one for foresightedness was one of his outstanding characteristics. During the sixty-seven months prior to November 15, 1935, when the vehicular part of the bridge was sold to the State Highway Commission for $1,800,000, the tolls—lower than at any other Ohio River crossing—aggregated $21,325 per month. The Company had to either sell or see the Highway Commission construct, at an estimated cost of $2,000,000, a bridge paralleling ours which would be a free bridge on completion. Very wisely, Mr. Hill saw that in this case discretion was the better part of valor. While in some quarters the purchase by the Highway Commission was severely criticised, the fact remains that tolls liquidated the price of the bridge in a few years and the bridge has now been free of tolls for nearly eight years.

With reference to Mr. Smith's ability to foresee future events, this little story is appropriate: In 1906, consideration was being given to the construction, for strategic purposes, of a thirty-five mile line between Cairo, Illinois and Thebes, Illinois. In discussing the plan with one of his staff officers, the latter asked, "How are you going to get across the river at Cairo?" Mr. Smith's answer was, "We have a good bridge at Cairo." When surprise was indicated, he called attention to the contract between the Illinois Central and the Louisville & Nashville, entered into a few years previously, whereby the Illinois Central was given the right to use our Henderson bridge, but the contract contained a clause giving the Louisville & Nashville the right to use, on the same terms and conditions, the Illinois Central bridge at Cairo, should it ever desire to do so. The Cairo and Thebes railroad, having served its purpose, even before the construction of the line was completed, was leased to the Iron Mountain, and is now being operated by the Missouri Pacific.

While the development of the natural resources of the southeast territory, particularly in Alabama, East Tennessee and Eastern Kentucky, was not, of course, altogether altruistic on the part of the Company, Mr. Smith realized, as all railroad men must, that there can be no sustained prosperity for a rail carrier if the territory that carrier was chartered to serve is in the slough of financial despond. Mr. Fink and Mr. Smith turned their hands first to the development of the Birmingham district—and what a wonderful job they made of that development. A through line, at least as far as Montgomery, Alabama, was the dream of both men, and the leasing of the Nashville & Decatur Railroad in 1870, the completion of the South and North Railroad between Decatur and Blount Springs, Alabama, and the investment of funds in what looked like promising industries, were, of course, part and parcel of that plan. They

could not anticipate the panic of 1873, and because of fiscal conditions existing in that year, and a year or two afterwards, the Louisville & Nashville found it had overextended itself. It was saved from serious financial embarrassment only through the Herculean efforts of Mr. Fink and Mr. Smith.

When Mr. Fink resigned on October 1, 1875, the effects of the 1873 panic were still in evidence and the improvements already made in the Birmingham district had some discouraging aspects. But at the time of his resignation, Mr. Fink fully realized that he was leaving behind him a man to carry on the work which had been begun by both five years before. It would be impossible, within the narrow limits of a paper like this, to touch even the high spots of the Alabama development which Mr. Smith carried on alone after Mr. Fink had passed out of the L. & N. picture. Suffice it to say that in the work by Ethel Armes—The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama, published in 1910, and standard on the subject in Alabama even now—comprising nearly six hundred pages, four pages are devoted to a biography of Mr. Smith, and in addition, he is mentioned in most glowing terms twenty times in that work. I quote one passage from the biography:

> He saw from the first that if a railroad was to be made a factor in the development of a State, increased traffic must not be its sole idea; but it must achieve power, influence, and success itself; it must not only live and let live, but it must create, originate, construct, develop, cooperate, and achieve. It must make low rates to induce consumption and to increase production.
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> "M. H. Smith is the biggest, broadest man you ever saw in your life!" DeBardeleben has said. One and all, to a man, the coal and iron men of Alabama stand up for the chief, "our greatest man," says George B. McCormack today. Were one to present item for item, an accounting of his work in the making of the mineral region, it would take a volume. Commencing with the summer of 1884, large investments were made in Alabama by the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company, for which appropriations were made by the Board of Directors, who acted on Milton H. Smith's recommendation. The sum spent from this date to 1908, including construction, acquisition, and equipment of railroads by this Company, amounts to more than thirty million dollars.
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> Colonel Shook relates an incident of the panic times of 1893, when M. H. Smith called all the coal and iron men together: "Keep in blast," Smith cried to them. "It don't make a deuced bit of difference what the freight rate is,—keep in blast! I'll carry the product to the market if I've got to haul it on my back!"
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> This one instance shows the sort he is. It may be said now for all time, Milton H. Smith is the man who emancipated the long shackled industry of our State and opened for it the vista into which it is now marching, led on by the captains of the present day forces.
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> To him belongs the credit, not merely of his own achievement in making the Louisville & Nashville system the greatest railroad in the South a durable and splendid public work, but also, as it has been pointed out, the sound, concrete development of the country and the achievements of his contemporaries are due in large part to him. This man has been the strongest force in the industrial history of Alabama. He is the great progenitor. "There is no part of that vast railroad system, or the country it traverses, that has not been strengthened by his hand," observed William L. Doan of Birmingham. "There is no man in his employ, from brakeman to vice-president, who has not felt the power of his personality,—that splendid, energetic, honest influence! Like Abraham—he will live in his children."

Henry F. DeBardeleben, referred to by the author, was President of the DeBardeleben Coal and Iron Company, and a pioneer in the development of the Birmingham district. To a newspaper correspondent, Mr. DeBardeleben stated that he hoped he would live long enough to see the State of Alabama erect a monument to Mr. Smith on Red Mountain in recognition of its debt

of gratitude to him. Only a month or two ago the same correspondent called attention in the Alabama Journal, published at Montgomery, to this expressed wish of Col. DeBardeleben. The monument has not yet been erected, but Mr. Smith is recognized in Alabama as the great builder he was and as the savior of the Birmingham district at a time when Chattanooga, Tennessee, under powerful sponsorship, sought to supplant Birmingham as "the Pittsburgh of the south." Not only were numerous branch lines constructed, but in many cases funds were advanced to encourage industrial enterprises.

If Mr. R. C. Ballard Thurston were here, he would, I think, agree with me that Mr. Smith accomplished more in the direction of the development of the natural resources of eastern Tennessee and eastern Kentucky than any other one man. The details of his activities in that direction would fill a book, consequently must be referred to here in generalities. I shall single out, however, the extension of the Lebanon Branch from Lebanon through Stanford, London, Corbin, and Williamsburg to Jellico, Tennessee, because it was the first big project in Kentucky, and the construction of the line from Corbin to Pineville involves an interesting story. While the extension was surveyed and some right of way was obtained in 1866, the actual construction, because of topographical difficulties, the 1873 panic, and delay in construction of the East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia Railway north from Knoxville, made the work "a plant of slow growth." The fact is that the connection with the road last mentioned, at Jellico, was not established until in September 1883. Mr. Smith's ultimate objective was an L. & N.-owned line from a point on the Lebanon Branch south of Williamsburg to Knoxville, and then to Atlanta, Ga. It was not until shortly after the turn of the century that the line to Knoxville was constructed and the line through to Atlanta was acquired. Another objective was to serve the then rich field of coal extending from Jellico, Tenn., north as far as Pittsburg, Ky., which afterwards became known as the Jellico district.

It was not easy to wean away people who for years had been using domestic coal from Pennsylvania, that coal being brought down the Ohio River for distribution through Cincinnati and Louisville gateways. As a consequence, the market for Jellico coal was very thin. But there was this drawback about the use of Pennsylvania coal: when the water in the river, during summer months, was low, or when in the winter the river was clogged with ice, coal users on a hand-to-mouth basis were out of luck. Mr. Smith determined to do something about this situation and at the same time obtain a haul of some two hundred miles for the Louisville & Nashville. On September 1, 1889 he made a contract with the operators of ten mines between Jellico, Tenn., and Pittsburg, Ky., under the terms of which the operators agreed to deliver lump coal f.o.b. mine at 87½c per ton and nut coal at 37½c per ton. On its part, the L. & N. agreed to haul the coal to Louisville for 70½c per ton, to establish two coal yards and promote the sale of the coal in the Louisville territory. In pursuance of this agreement the R. A. Watson Coal Agency was established and that agency operated under the general direction of Mr. W. N. Culp who had the title of General Agent for the Louisville & Nashville. In addition, an extensive advertising campaign was inaugurated and pursued intensively. After the market here had been firmly established, the R. A. Watson Coal Agency went out of business and Mr. Watson carried

on independently of the L. & N.

I can tell this story without compunction, because Mr. J. H. Ellis, the Company's secretary at the time, told it to me. Mr. Ellis, whose office was on the second floor of the Second and Main Street building, said that one morning Mr. Smith strode into his office, touched with his foot a scuttle of Jellico coal standing in front of the grate, and said, "Ellis, how do you like that coal?" Mr. Ellis replied that the coal was fine, the equal of any Pennsylvania coal he had ever seen. Then Mr. Smith said, "Your wife told Newt. Culp her coal was no good; it's the same coal." Mr. Ellis realized that his wife had committed a faux pas bordering on the sacrilegious, but, of course, there was nothing he could do about it.

Our Cumberland Valley Division, beginning at Corbin, Ky., was completed to Pineville, Ky., in May 1888. The event was celebrated at Pineville, and the interest manifested at Louisville justified the operation of a special train to carry Louisville citizens to Pineville. After the completion of the line to Pineville a serious difference in opinion arose between Mr. Smith and the board of directors. Supported by the views of geologists, including Mr. Thruston, and by his own observations when he had made a horseback survey from Pineville to Harlan, in Harlan County, Mr. Smith advocated reaching a connection with the Norfolk & Western at or near Norton, Virginia, by constructing a line up the Cumberland River valley and over or through Black Mountain. On the other hand, the board of directors favored a route through Middlesboro, Cumberland Gap and into Virginia through the valley of the Powell River. This Powell River valley route was strongly recommended by Mr. R. E. O'Bryan, who, at the instance of the board of directors, came down from New York and made an investigation on the ground. When that route was adopted in New York, Mr. O'Bryan was appointed engineer in charge and the line to Norton was constructed under his supervision. He did not report to Mr. Smith, his reports going direct to New York. In later years Mr. Smith referred to the Powell Valley route as a monumental and continuing blunder. Many years afterwards, about 1910, a line of railroad was constructed from Harbell, near Pineville, to Benham, in Harlan County, along the Cumberland Valley route originally advocated by Mr. Smith, and thus was tapped the truly wonderful coal fields of Harlan County.

In the eastern Kentucky development, millions of dollars have been profitably expended by the Louisville & Nashville. But the money was what today would be called "venture capital." The Louisville gateway was not sufficient to take care of the business of a fully developed eastern Kentucky and eastern Tennessee, to say nothing of the desirability of a through line to Florida and other sections of the southeast, through Knoxville and Atlanta, hence the desirability of the Cincinnati gateway. This problem began to receive the attention of Mr. Smith as long ago as 1891 when he bought the Kentucky Central Railway from the C. P. Huntington interests. The main line of that railroad extended from Cincinnati to a connection with the Lebanon Branch of the Louisville & Nashville at Sinks, in Rockcastle County, Kentucky. Improvements have been constant through the years so that now we have a low grade, double-tracked railroad from Harlan County to Cincinnati that has cost to date $62,705,000, including the original cost of the Kentucky Central, plus millions for the necessary rolling stock. On our Eastern Kentucky Division—a coal road, pure and simple

—for extensions and betterments during the past five years $6,750,000 has been expended, and during the same period, equipment allocated to that division cost $50,214,000. The Company's policy in this regard—which was Mr. Smith's policy—was aptly explained by Mr. John E. Tilford, Executive Vice President, in an address recently made at Lexington, Ky., before a coal operators' association, in which he said in part:

> We are looking ahead with courage and confidence, notwithstanding cautions and danger signals—confidence in ourselves, our associates and those we serve; confidence in our country and in our people to heed the signals and approach them under control until the clear sign for progress directs us forward to greater achievements.

A research has revealed that the archives of your Club contains only brief biographical sketches concerning Mr. Smith, carried in works published by Scribners and others, shortly after his death, and copies of unimportant letters addressed to Mr. Smith by Mr. Thruston more than half a century ago, the latter at the time, as stated, being in the service of the Louisville & Nashville as geologist in connection with the construction of the Cumberland Valley Division. There is also a dearth of data in the Louisville Public Library. This situation is readily understandable, for reasons set out in the following paragraphs which are intended to be at once explanatory and to give a more or less intimate picture of the man we knew as our chief executive officer for nearly forty years.

As the result of persistent urging by Mr. Jouett several years before Mr. Smith passed on, he promised to collaborate with Mr. Jouett in the preparation of his memoirs. The very next day he went to Mr. Jouett's office and told him to forget the promise he had made the day before, explaining that his memoirs, to be historically accurate, could not be written without criticism of men not then living, and that he would have none of it. Thus was lost to posterity the history of the life of a great man—a life that was crowded with adventure and constructive achievements. And some people called Mr. Smith ruthless.

Mr. Smith's theory was that no man should expect praise for doing his duty, therefore, he expected no encomiums for himself and he passed out few to his subordinates. When anyone undertook to compliment one of his achievements, Mr. Smith would invariably counter by calling attention to a project of his that did not turn out well, often referring to the construction of a spur track, at a very considerable expense to the Company, to a brown ore bed in the Birmingham district. It so happened that this particular deposit was very soon exhausted and the spur track was almost a total loss. After that it was Alabama's red ore that appealed to him. M. J. Reedy was Mr. Smith's secretary for a number of years. After he had been on the job a few months he said to his close friend and next door neighbor, S. S. Eastwood, who, at the time, was Secretary and Treasurer of the Henderson Bridge Company, "Sam, I don't know whether or not I am giving Mr. Smith satisfaction." "Does he say anything?" asked Eastwood. "No," replied Reedy, "that's the trouble, he doesn't say anything at all about my work." "Reedy," said Eastwood, "that's not trouble, that's insurance; if you were not giving satisfaction to the old man he would have had you out of his office on your ear a long time ago."

Mr. Smith attended few banquets and made no after dinner speeches. After Major James Geddes, Superintendent at Nashville, Tenn., had completed fifty years in the service of the Company, a banquet was held

at Nashville in his honor. Mr. Smith had a high regard for Major Geddes and he made the trip to Nashville to attend the dinner. He was listed as one of the speakers, and when he was introduced in flowery language by the toastmaster, Major E. C. Lewis, he arose and said that at his request the secretary of the Company had prepared an address suitable to the occasion, the address, he said, was somewhat lengthy and the hour was late, therefore he thought it better to omit the delivery of the address, promising it would be printed.

In the July 24, 1909 issue of Harpers Weekly, Col. George Harvey referred to M. H. Smith, James J. Hill and E. H. Harriman as the three great railroad presidents of that time. When a friend drew Mr. Smith's attention to that editorial, he replied in writing that he did not believe it was written by Col. Harvey, but that "by whomsoever written, the placing of me in a class with Messrs. Hill and Harriman is absurd. There could not possibly be greater contrast between my rather long period of drudgery and their financial exploits."

At another time, another periodical was not nearly so gracious. The August 19, 1933 issue of Collier's Weekly carried a special article by George Creel under the caption "Working on the Railroads," and in that article Creel referred to the Erie, Pere Marquette, Cincinnati, Hamilton and Dayton, New York, New Haven & Hartford, the Rock Island, the Frisco, and the Louisville & Nashville as having been looted to their ruin. Mr. Whitefoord R. Cole was President at the time and it will not be hard for those of you who knew Mr. Cole to visualize his indignation when the Creel article was read by him. Immediately he wrote a letter to P. F. Collier & Son Company denouncing the article as libelous so far as it pertained to our Company, demanded a retraction and called attention to the fact that the Louisville & Nashville was never looted, that the name written into the charter signed by the Governor of Kentucky on March 5, 1850 was the name it still bore, that it had never been reorganized, was never in the hands of a receiver, had never failed to meet its payroll on time, and he said he did not propose to permit the wanton effort of Creel to tarnish its good name to go unchallenged, "particularly so since Milton H. Smith, the honest, sturdy and able builder of the Louisville & Nashville, and its guiding spirit through so many years of its history, is not here to repel your attack." In its November 18, 1933 issue, Collier's did make a satisfactory retraction and it was carried prominently on the first page of that issue.

I have heretofore stated that I was in Mr. Smith's office only twice. The first time was in 1906, but the mission was unimportant. Not so on the occasion of my second visit. Early on the morning of December 21, 1917, the day after what will go down in the annals of our Company as that awful tragedy of ours, the Shepherdsville wreck, Mr. Smith went to Mr. Jouett's office to talk matters over with him. At that time Mr. Jouett informed him that I would be in charge of negotiations looking to an adjustment of claims growing out of the accident. Mr. Smith then asked that I be sent to his office. I have always thought that he simply wanted to look me over, for the reason that while the accident was due to man failure alone, nothing in his entire career affected him as did that accident. When I entered his office I was confronted by a greatly disturbed railroad president. He informed me that he knew personally two of the victims, one a banker, the other a lawyer, both of whom resided at Bardstown, and that he knew a number of others by reputation. He suggested that I disassociate myself from

my duties as Assistant District Attorney, and stated that if I cared to do so I could rent a suite of offices in a downtown office building. He said that the Company was prepared to go very far in order to reach an amicable adjustment of claims growing out of the wreck and that he was extremely anxious to avoid litigation. The interview lasted only about ten minutes, and, characteristically enough, the matter was not mentioned to me again until long after it had become a closed incident. Not content with the instructions given me at the time, very soon thereafter Mr. Smith wrote an open letter, addressed to interested parties, and had the letter published in Louisville papers, also in papers published in Bullitt, Nelson and Washington counties. In it he accepted full responsibility for the Railroad Company and promised that payment would be made on a fair basis. This letter so impressed Honorable Walter Evans, Judge of the United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky, that in a written opinion handed down about the time he stated the letter was notably commendable in spirit and tone, further, that he was much tempted to insert it in full in his opinion. When I made my final written report to Mr. Jouett, he sent it to the President and almost immediately I received a letter from the President in which he commended the manner in which the claims were handled throughout. Commendation did not flow from the fact that the claims were cheaply disposed of, because they were not. Comparatively speaking, a prodigious amount of money was expended for the purpose. What appealed to him was that only two cases were tried and both were unimportant. Needless to say, that letter of Mr. Smith's is one of my prized possessions.

Mr. Smith shunned newspaper interviews, but by no means was he insensible to the influence of public sentiment, and the words "the public be damned" were not in his vocabulary. He had a passion for accuracy, and in the interest of accuracy and clarity he preferred carrying his views to the press in communications written by himself and over his signature. I made it a point, whenever such printed communications came under my observation, to clip and preserve them. During one of the times when my office was changed, those clippings, much to my chagrin, were lost. They were probably destroyed by one who did not appreciate their value to me. At a time when persons interested in the promotion of the Louisville Southern Railroad were undertaking to interest the City of Louisville in subscribing for a million dollars' worth of stock in that Company, through the written and spoken word Mr. Smith vigorously opposed the project. His arguments against it must have been convincing to the city fathers; at any rate the investment was not made and thus a million dollars were saved. A passage in one of his numerous letters addressed to the editor of the Courier-Journal on the subject for some reason stands out in my memory. It called attention to the fact that repair shops, giving employment to large numbers of our fellow citizens, were being promised. With respect to this promise, Mr. Smith had this to say: "The City of Louisville is being promised a shop plant to be constructed in the west end of the city. Better have the promise nominated in the bond. Other localities will be solicited for funds and they too will be looking for shop plants." Mr. Smith based his arguments that the project was economically unsound on the proposition that the traffic, then and thereafter, between Louisville and Lexington and beyond did not justify the operation of two

railroads between those points. The soundness of that argument has since been abundantly established.

Mr. Smith's whole career is an eloquent tribute to the fact that in this great country of ours there are no heights to which its sons may not aspire if they have ability, reinforced by application, courage, and a will to overcome obstacles whenever and wherever encountered. If I were asked to name M. H. Smith's most constructive achievements, I would not name the magnitude of the improvements throughout the south. Instead, I would name, as I have already done in part, the many smaller and less important things, which, when welded into a concrete whole, not only made for human progress, but instilled in the minds and hearts of those under him, from the highest officer to the lowliest employee, the spirit of L. & N. service to the people his Company was chartered to serve and created within the family an *entente cordiale,* an *esprit de corps,* which is at once the glory of our organization and the pride of our forces.

It has been twenty-eight years and forty-two days since Milton Hannibal Smith passed away—"gone to that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler ever returns." But his spirit remains with those who worked with and loved him in life as an inspiration to "carry on," even as he did—modestly, dauntlessly, efficiently, building wisely for the future while adequately taking care of the business of the present; never contemptuous of public opinion, yet tenaciously insisting upon a square deal for the railroad industry; ever solicitous of the welfare of the Company's employes, yet demanding of them and receiving a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, coupled with a loyal devotion to duty. And those here present who are not of our fold, but who knew him for what he was, will, I know, agree with me that the poet Holland must have had in mind a man like Mr. Smith when he wrote—

> God give us men. A time like this demands
> Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands!
> Men whom the lust of office does not kill,
> Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy,
> Men who possess opinions and a will,
> Men who love honor, men who cannot lie.

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